

Action Together CIO
Financial Statements
31 March 2021

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Action Together CIO
Financial Statements
Year ended 31 March 2021

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Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report

Year ended 31 March 2021

The trustees present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Forward from our Chair

I am proud to introduce the Trustee Report for Action Together on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

I want to begin by recognising the amazing work of the voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise sector, and thank them for their solidarity and practical responses to care for one another throughout this unprecedented year.

It has been an honour to witness the sheer number of people volunteering, helping their neighbours, and making a difference in someone else's life. An incredible 2,175 volunteers registered with Action Together in the period covered in this report, all wanting to help others and be part of the response to COVID, with over half that number volunteering directly with Action Together. Whether delivering essential PPE, shopping for a neighbour, collecting donations safely from people's doorsteps, or helping in a foodbank - every volunteer has made a difference in our communities.

It's also been incredible to see the strength and connectedness across the VCSFE sector, with organisations pulling together, adapting their offers and responding to what our communities needed, when they were needed most. The drive of our members is what kept them going through the ups and downs of last year. On behalf of everyone at Action Together we want to thank you.

As Chair I'd also like to thank the staff, volunteers and fellow board members of Action Together. They too have adapted quickly to the significant numbers of asks and different ways of working that was expected of us throughout the pandemic. I know from the feedback we have received that they have been a help to so many people and organisations.

Also on a personal note, I'd like to say a few words about my time at Action Together. It is with sadness that I will be retiring as the Chair this year. I have been Chair of Action Together since its inception in 2016, and was a trustee of CVAT for many years before that. Being Chair of an organisation like Action Together has been a matter of real pride to me.

I have been deeply moved by the values that we have developed together with Action Together staff, and am assured that my fellow trustees, staff and the new Chair will continue the work of aligning organisational structures, policies and procedures to the values that we espouse, so that everything we do reflects our organisational DNA: "Believe It's Possible" "Strengthen Others" "Be True"

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to Action Together across Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside during my time on the Board.

Revd Roger Farnworth

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

About us: Our purpose, values and strategic objectives

Our purpose and charitable objects

'To strengthen the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, maximising opportunities to create positive social change, promote social justice and harness social benefit.'

Our charitable objects are to;

- promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the public, principally but not exclusively in the local government areas of Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside and the surrounding area and, in particular, to build the capacity of third sector organisations and provide them with the necessary support, information and services to enable them to pursue or contribute to any charitable purpose.
- promote, organise and facilitate co-operation and partnership working between third sector, statutory and other relevant bodies in the achievement of the above purposes within the area of benefit.

Our mission is to strengthen the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, increase individual social action, and work across organisational and sector boundaries to maximise every opportunity to harness social good and create social change.

There are an estimated 3788 voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups in Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside according to our 2020 State of the Sector research.

Public Benefit - how we decide who to help

We make decisions in line with the Public Benefit guidance (2014) and ensure;

- Decisions are taken in line with our charitable objects
- That we adhere to our values in the decision we take
- We prioritise our services to help those that would be unable to pay for the support and / or who are tackling a significant social injustice
- We identify and minimise risks
- There is no personal benefit (or advantage) given to trustees or staff

We will address the work we have done to meet our charitable objects and public benefit throughout the Activities and Impact section of this report.

Our values

Our values underpin all our activities including our strategy, operational plan, workforce development and recruitment. We want to be held to account on our values, as ways of working that we will always strive for.

Believe it's possible - vision and ideas matter. We have confidence in the power of people and communities and strive to release their potential to create the widest possible benefits whilst promoting social justice;

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Strengthen others - we work in ways that strengthen people, places, and partnerships. We achieve this by working collaboratively, sharing skills, and developing relationships between people, groups and agencies;

Be true - we are brave enough to share constructive insight to make progress. Our unique insight comes from our connections with, and amplification of, the diverse range of voices of people and groups that we work with.

Our strategic objectives

We adapted and expanded our strategic objectives this year in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. These objectives will be maintained from 2020 - 2023 and form a core part of our work.

Action Together Strategic Objectives 2020-23	How will we achieve this?
Be active in the COVID crisis response, protect and support the VCFSE as it provides vital support and faces unprecedented financial challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be an active part of the local emergency response to COVID, mobilising volunteers, securing resources, and facilitating connections to ensure the VCFSE can provide their vital role.• Lobby for, provide practical support and financial assistance for parts of the VCFSE that are most vulnerable.• Be a named partner (as a conduit to the VCSFE) in established emergency response structures and processes in each locality.
Design out inequality and poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inequality and poverty will not be eradicated unless we design it out. We must keep working on solutions and act for those experiencing hardship now. We must also work on longer term solutions including developing new economic models that help to address inequality and poverty.
Embrace digital technology but tackle digital exclusion and unequal access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will also work to increase the capacity and access to digital development with the local VCSFE.• We must work with others to tackle digital exclusion and develop initiatives to ensure fair access.
Be greener and tackle the climate emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We must build new alliances and partnerships to increase joint action that tackles climate change. Our work must start within Action Together and ensure this is factored into our everyday decision making on design and delivery of our services, procurement and training for staff and volunteers.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

More people involved in changing parts of the system that aren't working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will increase the scale of our collaborative action on system change, co-design, and coproduction. We will deliver new projects and develop approaches that demonstrate the power of working in this way to achieve positive social change. We will particularly focus on the experience and insight from those people often not involved in decision making.
Work more closely with our membership and those that most need our support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will actively promote membership and define the benefits, offer and ask for our members. We must apportion our resources and help where it is most needed and be able to flex our offer to suit what our members want from us.
Increase influence at GM that benefits local people and members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will strengthen our work with 10GM through more formal working arrangements with 10GM partners. By increased representation and GM networking we will be able to identify work strands in which we should take a more active lead and which will benefit our members.
Work smarter and create more impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will amend our structure and ways of working to ensure we can be active in neighbourhood working models and ensure the VCFSE are also directly plugged in to these. We will develop our skills in impact and storytelling and develop new process and approaches to provide impact evidence more systematically.
A happier workforce committed to our values and ongoing development and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to develop our commitment to our values and increase clarity on the behaviours that underpin these. We will keep learning from our staff teams and volunteers; responding directly to staff satisfaction surveys and insight and create ways of working that shares power and decision making. Develop new partnerships and opportunities for all our workforce to continue to learn and develop innovation and find inspiration from others.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

Structure, governance and management

Governance

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of Action Together and is ultimately responsible for everything the incorporated charitable does. Action Together's board can have a maximum of 14 Board members, 12 of which are elected from its membership, with the ability to co-opt a further 2 people.

We have a quarterly sub-group that provides additional oversight and scrutiny on Action Together's finances. Other thematic sub-groups are set up as they are required e.g. premises; HR; strategy. Action Together has two standing committees that steer the work of Healthwatch Oldham and Healthwatch Tameside. These have their own terms of reference but ultimate accountability of the contracts and employment is with Action Together.

Action Together honorary officers are:

Chair - Revd Roger Farnworth

Deputy Chair - Adrian Ball

Treasurer - Anne Parkes

A full list of the trustees can be found at <http://www.actiontogether.org.uk/our-trustees>

Board members are supported in their role by receiving an induction, and are offered support from the CEO and from other trustees. Trustees are encouraged to take up training and development opportunities, from the training we run but also on external training that is of interest.

Following the end of this financial year, our Chair Revd Roger Farnworth will step down from his role and leave the board. Roger has been the Chair of Action Together since we formed in 2016 and was an active member of T3SC Board for over 10 years before it. Roger will be missed by Action Together and in his work across Tameside, and alongside being our Chair we would like to thank him for being a great supporter of our charity and wish him the best of luck for the future. Roger will continue to hold the role of Chair for our 2021 AGM but will step down following the meeting. Our Board plans to elect the Honorary Officer positions at the first Board Meeting after the AGM.

Structure and management

The day to day running of the charity is handled through a scheme of delegation to the Chief Executive, Liz Windsor-Welsh. The Chief Executive leads the Senior Leadership Team, which consists of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Operations, and the three Senior Locality Leads responsible for the management of our three locality teams in Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside.

We had a team which averaged a headcount of 74 people. Although defined as a key worker employer, we did not furlough staff under the government furlough scheme.

Last year we had an office in each of the areas we support:

- Oldham - 12 Manchester Chambers, Oldham, OL1 1LF
- Rochdale - 104-106 Drake St, Rochdale, OL16 1PQ
- Tameside - 95-97 Penny Meadow, Ashton-Under-Lyne, OL6 6EP

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Following COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we temporarily closed our offices and moved to a distance-working model, with staff based at home. A limited number of staff were based in our Oldham office, following social distancing regulations, but all offices were closed to the public. After the close of FY 2020/21 we took the decision to leave our Rochdale office, and now maintain two offices in Oldham and Tameside as we look to develop a hybrid working model in FY 2021/22.

We continued to play a key part in 10GM, the joint venture to support the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester. Action Together represent three of the boroughs and remain committed to working with our colleagues at Bolton CVS, Salford CVS, MACC and associates of other boroughs in order to achieve our charitable objects. We worked with 10GM, partners from Greater Manchester public bodies and academic partners at the University of Salford to complete the State of the Sector research in 2020/21. The full State of the Sector report will follow in FY 2021/22.

Our Systems

Our operating systems and processes continue to evolve to ensure that we are compliant with legislation, improve our efficiency and productivity, and offering an easily accessible service to all members of the community.

We have closely followed COVID-19 rules and restrictions as they developed over the course of the pandemic. Before the first lockdown, we ensured hand sanitiser and signage was available in the offices. Following the closure of workplaces, we reviewed our working methods to support staff working from home. Our previous work developing new systems and processes in FY 2019/20 meant we had tools in place to transition to distance working, particularly in our use of Microsoft Teams, the new 3CX phone system, and our new local IT supplier Remedian.

We have a number of staff groups to address internal and external processes and systems. These thematic groups are cross-locality and membership is open to all staff members on a voluntary basis. The group topics link with our strategic objectives:

- Membership
 - Developing our Membership offer and process
- Tech
 - Share knowledge and best practice and identify solutions in relation to the use of IT across all organisation workstreams.
 - Identify software solutions and approaches to improve efficiency, data sharing, communications and impact information
- Training
 - Developing our training offer for members
- Staff Wellbeing
 - Looking at issues around staff wellbeing and providing a forum for ideas and feedback from staff

A key strategic priority for Action Together is to get more people involved in changing parts of the system that aren't working. Alongside strengthening the VCFSE sector, our role as an infrastructure organisation is to address the root causes of inequality and poverty in our communities.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

To help us to achieve this, we designed the Engagement and System Change Manager role to help us develop the internal skills and external capacity to identify opportunities and work towards positive social change. Our new System Change Managers, Maddy and Robbie, work with our strategic partners from across sectors to identify the opportunities and secure the resources to create system change work, with meaningful engagement and design from local people and the VCFSE. They also work internally to collect and share learning and develop our internal confidence and capabilities to engage in system change work.

Examples of system change work include:

- Action learning/reflective practice sets for our Officers
- Virtual facilitation toolkit for our members, including how to use Zoom and other tools
- Involvement in creation of Oldham Poverty Truth Commission
- Social prescribing induction process
- Development of our insight collecting tools and capabilities

We have continued to develop <https://www.actiontogether.org.uk> for our members, improving our Community Activity Directory, Find Funding page, and navigation. Our website saw a big increase in visits, with a total of 569,323 hits across the site. Our most popular pages were Find Funding, Volunteering, and COVID information. In the coming year, we plan to further develop our website including further improving navigation and developing our most popular pages.

We continue to ensure we are compliant with GDPR data protection, through our Data Protection Officer, and the latest employment legislation.

Risk management

All risks are identified and logged in a central file. All risks are escalated to the CEO and action taken according to the individual risk. Any risks that need to be escalated to the Board is done through email/phone if an immediate decision is required or through the quarterly board papers. All complex projects have a risk plan as part of the project initiation process.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Activities and Impact



We continue to organise the work we do around core central themes. As we're dedicated to addressing the individual needs of each borough, our services in the three localities may differ depending on the need of that area, but the matrix structure standardises these services. The matrix helps clarify our offer both to members and our staff.

Throughout the pandemic, we have benefitted from increased cross-locality working around these core themes. Our Volunteering, Development and Investment teams in each locality have worked closely together to respond to the changing needs of our members and develop our service offer. This has helped make our offer more consistent across the localities, as we standardised processes and services such as volunteer registration, training and funding applications. Digital working has had a benefit in helping staff from different localities meet more regularly, and we plan to develop this further in FY 2021/22.

The following pages feature highlights of our activities and impact over the last year, categorised under our core themes. In addition, we continued to operate our Healthwatch Oldham and Healthwatch Tameside services, Miles of Smiles community transport service, and Social Prescribing in Oldham and Tameside, which are included in the Partnerships section.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

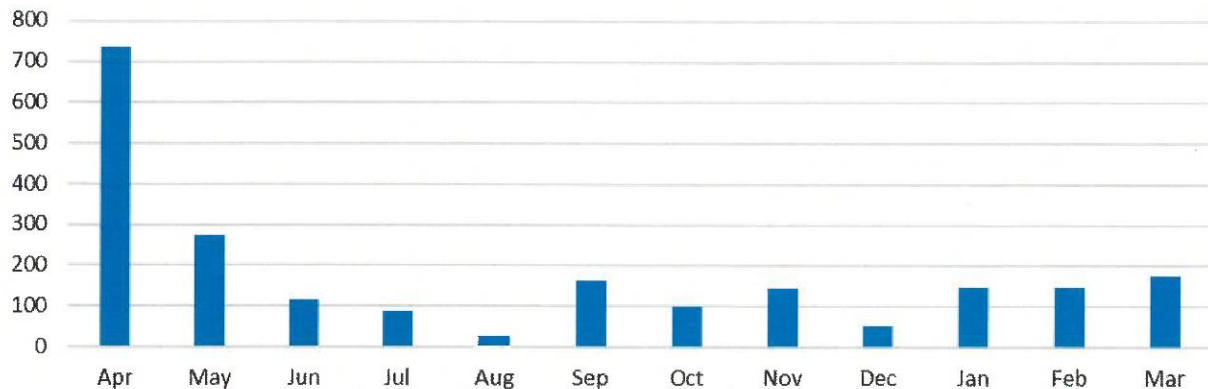
VOLUNTEERING

- 2,175 volunteers registered
- 91% matched with volunteering opportunities (1,972)
- 1,051 people volunteered directly with Action Together

When the COVID lockdown was announced in late March 2020 we immediately repurposed our Volunteering page to register Emergency Response Volunteers (<https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/volunteering>). We had an incredible response to the call for volunteers, with 1,127 people registering through our website in the first quarter alone. This is in addition to 440 people registering at the end of March following the initial lockdown. For comparison, these figures are higher than the number we would normally register in a year.

We established an emergency volunteering framework for Action Together, putting in place the necessary new structures, risk management and internal processes to enable us to respond and manage emergency volunteers. With this in place we can use the same model for future emergency responses. The response of our Volunteering teams meant we were able to respond to the public outpouring of help and support, and our position as recognised volunteer brokerage service in Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside helped us connect volunteers with public sector partners and community organisations looking for support.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021



The above graph demonstrates the high number of new people who registered to volunteer with Action Together during the initial lockdown in April 2020. This gave us a bank of volunteers who were then placed in roles in the following months.

Volunteer availability became an issue as furlough support ended and volunteers began returning to work. This also impacted on the number of new volunteers registering, as did the loosening of restrictions in the summer. However, we're pleased that the number of new and active volunteers maintained a steady rate through the second half of the year.

Not all registered volunteers were able to formally take up a role through Action Together. Some volunteers were in shielded groups themselves, and there were not always as many volunteer roles as volunteers registered. In total, **1,051 people volunteered directly with Action Together**, in a variety of roles including our doorstep donation schemes, delivery of PPE, Community Warehouse and community hubs, and in test and trace and vaccination support. This is a huge rise in the number of volunteers we have worked with in other years, and our Volunteer team worked incredibly hard to work with our volunteers and place them in the roles where they were most needed.

Our locality teams worked to engage all our registered volunteers more permanently by communicating directly and regularly with them to share volunteer opportunities. We also created **local volunteer community Facebook groups** and introduced **regular Volunteer Ebulletins** to promote local volunteering opportunities. This has helped us reach members of the public who may not otherwise have considered volunteering and created a sense of community around volunteering, as well as a new audience for Action Together's work. It also helped us assign volunteers quickly to short notice requests for support, such as in Rochdale, where we connected the Middleton Co-operative Partnership with six volunteers from the area within two days, or supported Rochdale Council by identifying a volunteer on the same day as an urgent request to assist a resident in Littleborough with shopping. In Tameside, we brokered 20 volunteers to a new soup kitchen in Ridgehill to help prepare and deliver food in the community.

Action Together CIO

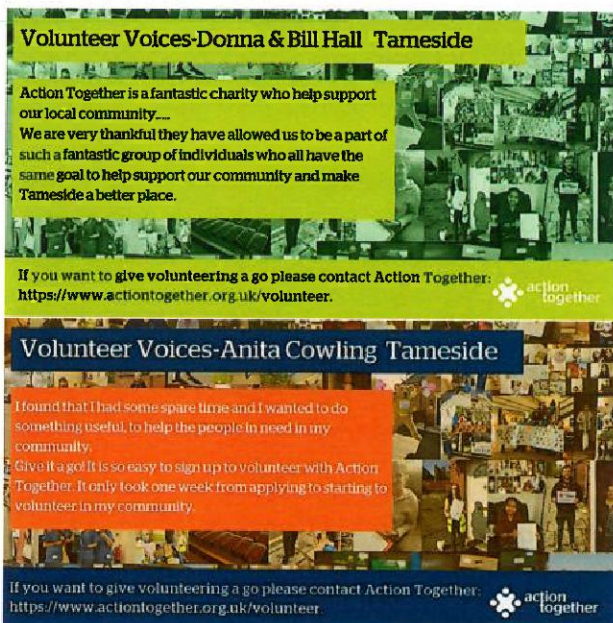
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Our teams responded to changing volunteer demands and the reduction in public travel by adapting the brokerage service to identify more hyper-local, informal volunteer roles at a neighbourhood level, such as litter picks and local clear ups.

In response to requests from some of our larger local charities, who saw a decline in volunteers since the pandemic, we launched the popular **Meet the Charities** events to help with volunteer recruitment. At these online sessions potential volunteers can speak to Volunteer Managers to learn more about what their VCFSE group does, what volunteer roles they offer, and how volunteers can get involved. We record these sessions and host them on our YouTube channel so volunteers can find out about local charities even if they don't attend the original event.

We also began sharing **Volunteer Voice** stories from people volunteering with us in lockdown, with the aim of promoting volunteering to others on social media:



Our Volunteer and Development teams in all three localities began meeting weekly on Zoom as a combined team to share knowledge, address issues, and respond quickly to COVID. This has been effective in standardising our processes and co-ordinating work across the localities.

One key learning was that our **easy sign-up process** for emergency response volunteering was very effective, with fewer barriers to entry meaning more people could get involved in volunteering. We worked closely with GMCVO to scope and design a new, easier process and registration platform on our website. We combined this with improvements in the registration journey, including improving the process to register for a role on the website, and the communications volunteers receive. There is now one combined process for all volunteer registrations, which meets our requirements in gathering key information from new volunteers, while making the process simpler and easier to complete.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Mutual Aid

Alongside the influx of new volunteers through our emergency response process, we also saw a number of new mutual aid groups appearing across the three localities. Our teams worked to map out the new groups in their areas, and while we did not register volunteers for the unconstituted groups, we **offered assistance and produced guidance** for the groups.

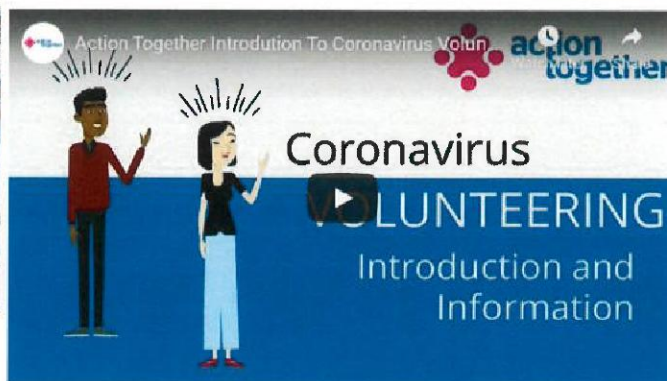
We created a mutual aid guide (<https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/mutual-aid>) early in lockdown at a time when advice and guidance was limited. This page became one of the **top three national results on Google** for mutual aid searches and gained 7,689 hits across the year, just under half of which came in April 2020. A number of the mutual aid groups have now developed into longer-term concerns with assistance from our Development teams.

Community Hubs

We were active in the development and delivery of emergency responses through neighbourhood **Community Hubs** set up across localities. We developed volunteering roles, new volunteering job descriptions with accompanying risk assessments, and in many cases managed the volunteers in their new roles. This included producing training including the creation of a video induction for volunteers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDxvw2ijRL4>

Angela Rayner MP visited a Community Hub in Droylsden to meet with Action Together staff and volunteers. The MP for Ashton-Under-Lyne said, “the past few months have been incredibly difficult for some people, especially those who have been shielding or those with little support. It was so wonderful to meet with these incredible volunteers who have given their time to make sure the most vulnerable members of our community are getting the help they need.” The visit received press coverage including in the [Oldham Chronicle](#).



Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Foodbanks

In Tameside, our team helped address the decline in foodbank donations in lockdown by using **volunteers to collect donations door-to-door**. The team's work developing place-based teams and knowledge across the borough helped facilitate teams of neighbourhood volunteers to support local foodbanks.

The team created leaflets which volunteers delivered, and volunteers returned on a specified date to collect donations outside the door. At the end of Q1, we had collected an amazing 1,454 bags of food for Tameside foodbanks.

In Oldham, we worked extensively to support the local foodbank. Our Emergency Response Volunteers supported the delivery of the humanitarian aid offer, working closely with Oldham Foodbank. **We managed around 100 volunteers each week in Oldham Foodbank** in a range of roles from collecting food donations, to picking and packing food packages, to delivering to the door for residents. Our Oldham Social Prescribing Manager provided management capacity support to the Oldham Foodbank through the year, managing the operational delivery lead development work with the charity's trustees and successfully securing grant investment for ongoing management capacity.

Test and Trace/Vaccination Support

Towards the end of the year, we worked with local partners to deploy **volunteers to support test and trace work**, including at testing centres. This was later followed by supporting the vaccination roll out in Q4.

We developed new volunteering roles to support Oldham's Vaccination roll-out and have specifically been **supporting the community based 'pop-up' vaccination clinics** in mosques and community centres. We co-ordinated 81 volunteers to support 13 community 'pop-ups' in the last 3 months of the year, alongside support for public messaging around the vaccination. Our members were also key in getting the message about test and trace and vaccinations out to communities.

At the start of the pandemic, we wanted to offer an opportunity for people looking to volunteer to get involved in the crisis response in Oldham. There was a huge outpouring of public interest in volunteering, as well as a new potential audience due to the high number of people on furlough from their workplace. Due to our role as the recognised volunteer centre for Oldham Borough, we quickly moved to provide an outlet for people who wanted to help.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

Spotlight on...
Oldham
Emergency
Response
Volunteering



We developed a volunteer recruitment pathway, new systems and processes, and emergency response volunteer roles. This would help us respond to the many people visiting our website and contacting us and help quickly recruit local people to be able to help with the crisis response. We also put in place measures, working closely with our public health partners to ensure the safety of our volunteers and the people they were helping.

Having drawn up our plans, we quickly set up a new online recruitment process and training package and worked with Oldham's community response system to identify where volunteering capacity was needed. This was initially in the Oldham Foodbank and Food Distribution Hubs, who had seen a fall in volunteer numbers due to shielding restrictions. As the pandemic went on, the need grew to include mobilising volunteers to support with doorstep engagement around public health and COVID messaging, promoting test and trace, supporting the testing programme, and at the end of the year supporting community vaccination clinics.

Across the year we recruited and supported 853 local volunteers in Oldham to become part of the pandemic response, with around 150 active volunteers deployed each month. These volunteers were an essential part of the response to COVID, and we're grateful to everyone who came forward and volunteered to help in communities across Oldham.



Spotlight on... Volunteering in Rochdale

Our Rochdale team have highlighted two of their volunteers in the borough:



“Action Together recruit volunteers from far and wide across the borough and come into contact with many dedicated and passionate people who want to give something back to the community - none more so than husband and wife duo Gwen and Andy Eckersley. During the pandemic Gwen and Andy offered their service to help support Emergency Food Parcels across the borough, but their help did not stop there. They then put themselves forward to support the Community Warehouse that is set up to offer a more sustainable food crisis provision for the borough.

Task

Every month Gwen and Andy have dedicated many hours to support the much-needed day-to-day tasks of the Community Warehouse. This includes picking and packing orders, ensuring food delivered and donated is put on shelves, checking dates on stock and rotating as required, support with general cleanliness of the warehouse, and help promoting the Warehouse in general. Nothing is too much trouble for them and there's nothing they wouldn't do - if they get asked, they do it. No questions, they just help!!

Without this much needed support the Community Warehouse would not be where it is today, with a great system for getting much needed food out to the community or be as organised as it is. Gwen is also passionate about recycling so every single carrier bag or box that is used at the Warehouse is recycled and used again. They support other volunteers and ensure the camaraderie amongst the team is always happy and the Warehouse is a great place to volunteer.

Gwen and Andy are a truly amazing couple who have dedicated over 20 hours a month to the Community Warehouse and ensured its success. Our hidden HEROES!”



Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

DEVELOPMENT

- **Formally supported 1,093 groups to develop**, with indirect or informal support to many more
- **1,728 people attended our training and events activities**, all hosted online

Early in the first lockdown our Development teams and wider Community Development workforce **contacted our members and the wider local VSCFSE sector to understand the impact** both on service provision and finances. We produced and released a survey to provide evidence to lobby locally for increased resources and ensure we were responding to our members' needs.

We postponed all training and events and began to develop remote **online training**.

Alongside this, we **reviewed the navigation of our website to foreground information about COVID**. We created a central page (<https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/covid-19>) to collate information for individuals looking to volunteer, donate, or find support, and for groups looking for volunteers, funding, or advice. The page also included links to government, council, NHS and public health information. We added resources including risk assessments to help our members adapt to the restrictions.

As lockdown progressed and information between the three localities began to diverge, we **created locality COVID pages** for more localised information and advice.

Alongside Volunteering staff, **Development teams from all three localities began to meet weekly** on Microsoft Teams to co-ordinate our collective response to the pandemic. This was hugely beneficial in standardising our processes and sharing learnings from each locality. The team developed a very effective way of working together to quickly respond to changing restrictions. By sharing knowledge and communications, they developed advice and guidance relevant to all three boroughs. This has made information across the localities easier to find for our members.

The team conducted extensive work on developing **guidance to help groups interpret COVID restrictions** when the local Tier 2 and 3 rules were introduced in the summer.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

In support of this we introduced **weekly Reopening drop-in sessions on Zoom**. Sessions were to support groups and owners of buildings thinking of reopening or restarting events. These drop-ins developed to take a wider focus on COVID, where we shared the latest advice and guidance, and groups offered peer-to-peer support to each other across localities. The sessions also helped us collect information and assess the needs of groups each week.

We also created a new Reopening page on our website specifically for the latest information, advice and resources for groups. This was well received, quickly becoming one of the most popular pages on our site.

As the country moved from the relaxed restrictions of the summer into a tier system and second lockdown, and VCFSE groups had to cease in-person activities, our Reopening advice was no longer as relevant. The team quickly amended and developed the advice to cover all aspects of COVID restrictions, turning the page into a go-to **Advice For Community Groups During COVID hub**. The team developed this according to the different tier levels and lockdown restrictions, meaning when short-notice changes were made to the rules, we could quickly update our advice.

A good indicator of the success of this work is the hits on the Advice for groups page on our website. The page was consistently one of the most visited since launched, with 5,448 hits in the five months since going live in November. **Whenever changes to restrictions were announced, we would see an uplift in visits to the page.** This shows that groups were used to looking for the information from us and were finding it themselves. We're also aware that groups in other parts of the country used the information we've developed, and we often received queries about it through our website.

We introduced a **weekly Action Together ebulletin** to all members, in order to share the latest information and updates. As the year progressed, localities diverged in their responses and more information came to us to share with our members, so we introduced **fortnightly locality ebulletins**. These changes were effective in getting the latest updates, advice, funding opportunities and training to our members, and we continued with this model throughout the year.

In response to the initial survey of our members, and requests for more information on funding and online training, we introduced **fortnightly Funding and Training ebulletins**. These mailouts go to all members across the three localities and include national and local funding opportunities, and internal and external training we recommend to VCFSE groups. This has continued to lead to increased engagement with our funding offer and online training and received good feedback from members for the amount of relevant information we're sharing.

One benefit from the move to online working was the way groups from different localities could attend the same training session, encouraging cross-locality connections and co-working. We capitalised on this by introducing our **#WednesdaysWeekly** Zoom sessions. Each Wednesday there is a session open to all members across localities, with the themes in response to information our members are looking for. The regularity and topics have seen good attendance, and particularly popular were sessions on opening up community facilities safely, retaining volunteers and volunteer wellbeing, and support for bid writing.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

We will continue the sessions, and record all #WednesdaysWeeklys so members can watch later on [our YouTube channel](#).

The team used this learning to further develop our existing training offer. Development and Training staff worked together to plan in a **long-term training calendar**, making use of attendance data and feedback to deliver more of the training our members need. The move to online training has meant teams can work together more closely to deliver training across localities, and groups from different areas can come together during these sessions in ways they could not before.

In March we marked a year since the first lockdown with a reflective event. **'Reflecting on COVID-19: Sharing the lessons learnt and moving forward in 2021'** was open to members across the three localities. We adopted a change framework developed by the RSA which attendees were able to work through together to identify what they need to 'Let Go, End, Amplify, and Restart'. This session helped us in focusing on the needs of our members as we move into a new financial year and the next stage of the pandemic, and we developed plans for an early year campaign providing groups with Funding information and further campaigns to help groups reconnect with the volunteers after lockdown.

In Oldham and Tameside, we **developed our place-based offer** throughout the year. The aim of this work was to focus on neighbourhoods within localities, bringing staff together from Volunteering, Development and Social Prescribing to build neighbourhood teams across the boroughs. This work will develop into a fully launched model in the next financial year.

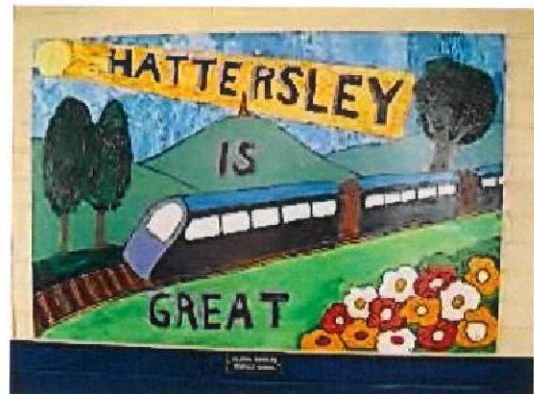
Spotlight on... Community Development in Tameside

Tameside Community Development team have highlighted some of the groups they've worked with this year.

Michaëlle shares her experiences of working with Friends of Hattersley Station:

"Friends of Hattersley Station are a volunteer-led group that maintain the green space outside the station. They have raised beds there, and do regular litter picks while spending some quality time outdoors.

In summer 2020, when the lockdown restrictions were eased, Babs, the chair of the group, got in touch as they wanted to use the opportunity for the volunteers to meet again after a long time and to clear the station garden. But due to the pandemic and lockdown, the group of volunteers could not meet, and subsequently they also lost a few volunteers.



Because of this Babs initially got in touch for help to recruit more volunteers to help out on the day. As we were talking to Babs we also identified that they needed support to make sure that the activities the volunteers would do were COVID safe.

We worked with Babs to interpret and understand the government guidelines and how they applied to the activities the volunteers were going to do. We sent Babs COVID safe risk assessment templates to help her with putting together one for the group and activities. We discussed the different planned activities such as litter picking and weeding the raised beds, and talked about what the risks were, how to make them safe and what she could do to mitigate any risks. I also went down to the station garden with Babs where we did a walkthrough of the planned activities in order to test their COVID safe risk assessment. Babs found this very helpful, and thanks to the walkthrough and having a second opinion, she was able to identify parts of planned activities that were not as Covid safe as she thought they were and was able to modify and change that.

Once Babs felt confident about the planned activities and risk assessment, we were able to put a shout out for volunteers to come out on the day to help out. We advertised this on our volunteer page on the website, and on the Tameside Community Volunteers Facebook page. Four people showed interest in coming along on the day, which Babs said was a very successful session. As a result of the volunteer shout out, out of the four volunteers that came on the day, one of them has now become a regular volunteer with Friends of Hattersley Station."

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021



Chris introduces Friends of Tame Valley:

“Friends of Tame Valley are a volunteer-led group that maintain the paths and surrounding areas around the Tame Valley. They do regular litter picks while spending some quality time outdoors with other local volunteers. When the

lockdown restrictions were eased, Andrew Gwynne MP, the chair of the group, got in touch with us as they wanted to start a new group to clean up the Tame Valley area.

I worked with the group to formalise them into a friend's group, using our 'Becoming A Friends Group Factsheet', and supported them step-by-step to complete their constitution and set up a bank account. I also worked with them through a risk assessment for their activities, and a COVID risk assessment we produced during lockdown. Once the group was formalised, they held their first AGM, inviting the local community to attend and be part of it.

After the AGM the group had a high number of volunteers who wanted to support the group. Unfortunately, they didn't have enough equipment for the volunteers, so I worked with the group to help them write a bid for an Action Together Microgrant so they could purchase more equipment. They were successful in bidding for £1,000 from us, a great result.

Friends of Tame Valley now have over 100 volunteers signed up and going out regularly over the weekend. They collected over 500 bags of rubbish, making the site cleaner and more friendly for families. The Friends are now looking at introducing group activities, such as coffee mornings and a walking group, to build on their success.”



Action Together CIO

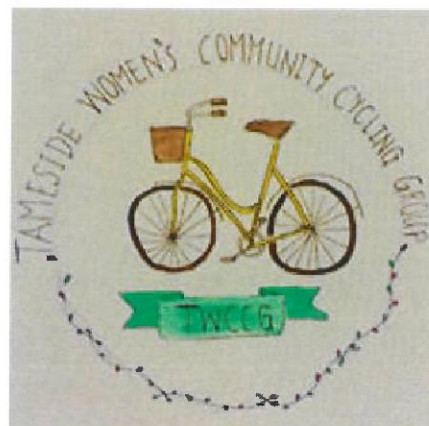
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Ammer reflected on his work with Ashton Women's Community Cycling Group:

"A local person called Atchara phoned Action Together with an idea to set up a Women's Community Cycling Group in Ashton to encourage women, especially BAME women, to take up cycling.

Atchara needed support thinking about what she needed to do to make her idea happen, to find likeminded individuals that would help her set up a community group, and to look at what would be the best way to set up a community group.



I supported Atchara to identify her first steps, and once she had likeminded people interested in becoming part of developing a community group, we moved on to looking at the appropriate legal structures.

We very quickly identified that an unincorporated group would be the best place to start. Atchara went away with the information I provided and worked with the new committee to develop their aim and objectives, and we provided feedback to further strengthen their structures. I helped guide them through other areas of the constitution including quorum on meeting, an AGM, and the management committee amongst other things.

The group was named Tameside Women's Community Cycling Group on signing the constitution and aims to promote women's cycling in Tameside and throughout Greater Manchester with learn-to-ride, cycling confidence and bike maintenance sessions as well as group social rides.

The group went on to secure £3,000 start-up funding to purchase bikes and pay for training and other expenses. They have gone on to provide sessions for local Tameside women and have had interest from women from BAME backgrounds. With the help of our Development team, the group also started to identify and build links with local organisations so that they could raise their profile and encourage more people to get involved.

You can find out more and see their upcoming events on their website:

<https://twccg.org/>



1Photo courtesy TWCCG/Tameside Reporter

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

PARTNERSHIP

To better promote our networks and the work they do, we launched three new webpages to host **information about the range of networks we facilitate** across the localities. The pages pull together information about what the networks are, when they meet, and how people can get involved:

- [Oldham Networks](#)
- [Rochdale Networks](#)
- [Tameside Networks](#)

[COVID](#)

Throughout the year we worked with public sector partners across the three boroughs and in Greater Manchester in the response to COVID. This includes extensive work in Oldham on **community engagement, sharing council communications, promoting test and trace, and guiding our member organisations and the people they work with to available support and information.**

In Oldham we became an active partner at the Strategic Co-ordination Group (Gold), the Tactical Co-ordination Group (Silver) and in a number of the thematic Bronze Groups, Co-lead the Community Bronze, and the Equalities Advisory Board. We continue to work collaboratively in these spaces and influence policy and decision making.

We have continued to provide the strategic representation for the VCFSE across Oldham Partnership and also in the Covid Emergency Response Governance. We provided a significant amount of leadership and operational capacity to developing and delivering the Oldham approach to the community model for delivering pop-up vaccination clinics.

In Rochdale, we contributed to the COVID engagement work at a strategic level and produced a **VCFSE Signposting Sheet**. This pulled together information on Mutual Aid across the borough, connecting them with and signposting to the Emergency Support Hubs. The resource is updated every two weeks and distributed to key partners in the council and VCFSE sector. This has proved an invaluable piece of work, not only in helping groups and organisations understand what great voluntary work is happening across the borough, but also proved invaluable in helping people in terms of signposting to the correct service and need.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

The Rochdale Inclusive Messaging group includes those who know and understand Black and South Asian communities, organisations that are embedded in communities, or support particular age groups, families or carers. The group benefits from the experience of user led groups, volunteers, disability focused groups and people who work to connect communities and promote cohesion. The group has discussed a range of topics, from the need for COVID-Safety videos in different languages to assessing why an anti-vaccine leaflet might work with different communities.

In Tameside, VSIG met to look at COVID effects and issues. Insights helped identify key Tameside priorities, and these priorities were linked through to our new **Social Infrastructure Funding**, to ensure funding is directed to where it is needed most

We facilitated further VSIG meetings to cover staff resilience support for sector leaders, staff and volunteers, and to cover feedback from Community Anchor organisations.

We also contributed extensively to **community engagement** with COVID messaging, test and trace, and the local vaccination programme through the weekly COVID Diversity Champions meetings and the Tameside Diversity Network. The Diversity Champions developed 100 COVID Champions, including members of the group.

Action Together is the VCFSE representative on the **GM Contain Cell**, a body that is responsible for the interpretation of data and intelligence that makes recommendation on safety measures and targeted action into the GM Strategic Coordination Group.

Foodbanks

Foodbanks saw a number of challenges in lockdown, including a lack of volunteers due to shielding and a fall in donations as venues which hosted donation points closed. Our existing relationships with foodbanks meant we were able to **respond and support** them through these challenges.

Tameside Partnership team worked closely with the Development team to support foodbanks, and we delivered the **door-to-door collection scheme**.

Oldham team supported directly by **operationally managing the work of the foodbank**. The foodbank was temporarily set up at Oldham Community Leisure Centre, and the Oldham team supported with distribution and by securing donations from local businesses.

We **continue to work closely with and support the foodbanks**, including through the provision of volunteers.

Our Partnership networks have also led to further discussions around poverty and food poverty. Our Partnership team supported the **Greater Manchester Poverty Action Poverty Tool Pilot**, which will look at designing a tool for people referring to foodbanks. The tool will help to support people to look into why access to a foodbank is needed and ensure people get the added support they need. The main aim of the project is to maximise people's income by doing benefit checks and supporting with budgeting. We have been ensuring that the right people are involved, attending the working group meetings and

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

working closely with GMPA. We organised two information sessions for foodbank referrers, with around 20 - 25 people attending. We continue to sit on the working group and ensure that local organisations are involved.

Winter Support

As in previous years, we delivered extensive partnership work through winter. The centre of this was our annual Winter Support campaign.

This year, we split the campaign into **Get Help** and **Give Help** strands. Get Help pulled together a directory of crisis support and neighbourhood contacts across the three localities. We have received positive feedback from partners and staff, who use the directory themselves to provide support to people in the community.

Give Help combined volunteer registration with our own appeals, and links to key partners such as Oldham or Tameside foodbanks, so members of the public could easily donate and support appeals in their community.

COVID brought new challenges to the usual activity, as VCFSE groups had to reduce the number of events they held over the Christmas period. It also meant activity such as the annual **Tameside Toy Appeal** had to adjust, as in-person donations were limited by business closures, and regular collections were no longer possible.

Tameside team adapted to the challenge by recruiting 64 volunteer 'Doorstep Elves' and 'Sleigh Drivers'. Donations were made via leafletted collections from people's doorsteps, building on prior work we've done during the pandemic to collect doorstep donations. This meant that despite COVID restrictions, the **appeal was our most successful ever, with over 10,000 toys donated, and £3,649 raised** on our JustGiving appeal. Steven Pleasant, Chief Executive of Tameside Council, joined us to collect donations and thank local schoolchildren for their support, which you can [watch on our Facebook page](#).

We also developed our doorstep engagement in the other boroughs, with Rochdale introducing **Street Ambassadors** as part of a partnership with other charitable organisations in the area. The scheme collects food supplies for distribution to local food banks, as well as good condition digital equipment, to be donated to the Digital Tech Library. The Library was created by Action Together in partnership with a group of grassroots organisations, to address digital poverty and exclusion through the pandemic. The partnership is developing a borough-wide tech loaning offer with local Library Services.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

Network Highlights

Oldham

Poverty Truth Commission: Set up the Commission, recruited Grassroots Commissioners, held engagement sessions and worked alongside Oldham Council and the Poverty Agenda Group.

Community Explorers Network: Delivered monthly place-based networks across the five neighbourhoods, connecting the sector with partners, and sharing asks, offers, information and insight. The networks are now embedded in the Public Sector Transformation Programme.

Food Solutions Network: Brought together around 40 VCFSE groups and organisations that deliver emergency food and support. The network used its insight to secure £50,000 DEFRA funding, which has been invested in addressing inequalities for people from minority communities. Through the network we ensured there was a February half-term enhanced food offer to families

We also significantly contributed to Oldham partnership work including:

- Oldham VCFSE Women's Network
- Oldham Leadership Board
- Communities Board
- Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership
- Poverty Strategy Group - including progressing the Poverty Truth Commission work
- Food Partnership Board - which includes the food security work
- Both Adult and Children's Safeguarding Boards
- Children's' Strategic Alliance
- GM Moving Local Pilot

Rochdale

Grassroots Gatherings: a regular time and a place when VCFSE organisations can come together, share updates, and make asks and offers of what they can give or share with others. Moved online in lockdown and also held four 'Family Focused' Grassroots Gatherings. There have been many examples of networking and collaboration such as the distribution of the GMCA Creative Care kits for young people in different communities across the borough.

The **Digital Tech Library Consortium** is a big success from Grassroots Gatherings. Following discussions about how some people are 'digitally excluded' as they do not have access to equipment, a brilliant group of voluntary sector partners came together with

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

support from Action Together. The consortium secured funding to purchase new tablets to loan out to people, with support from a Digital Champion, developed and signed a Partnership Agreement and secured funding to purchase 20 devices, attracted interest, [including press coverage](#), and additional investment opportunities to expand the offer, hosted a Digital Inclusion Discussion Group for groups across Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside, and influenced a GM bid for additional funding for Digital Coordination.

Other Highlights:

- Provided partnerships support to develop a new **Disability Forum**
- Provided partnership support to develop a new **Women's Services Forum**
- Closer working with Healthwatch, Rochdale Borough Council and Heywood Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group and other VCFSE partners through #TogetherRochdale
- [Cooperative Engagement places and spaces](#) - creation and sharing document including with our own members and with public sector partners
- **Economic Support Network:** developing a triage tool for people in financial difficulty and frontline workers/volunteers supporting them so people can get the right input on all their key needs
- Organised a one-day workshop in November with **Adult Social Care** for a combined council staff/voluntary sector audience, focused on financial wellbeing
- Supported the **FASD Network** to develop 6 online Lunchtime Learnings sessions and an FASD Resource for Parents, Carers and Families.

Tameside

Refugee and Asylum Seeker Network: Brought together ESOL providers from Tameside with the North West ESOL Co-Ordinator to pull together ESOL materials. The materials were piloted and received good feedback from users, and will be rolled out across the North West. The network focused on COVID throughout the year, and how it affects asylum seekers and refugees, and presented to Andrew Gwynne MP, who sits on Home Office Committee

COVID Diversity Champions: Facilitated weekly meetings to bring together BAME organisations and representatives from population health and Tameside Council. This has helped improve accessibility of information, and ensure messages are shared in local communities. The group developed 100 COVID Champions and facilitated a separate meeting with representatives from black and Caribbean communities to discuss vaccine plans and comms. The group worked together to continue to ensure that messages are being shared in local communities, including translating materials, and put into the right places in the community.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Tameside Diversity Network: Co-produced strategies to improve access to healthcare services for people from communities experiencing racial inequalities. The network was established to share community partners' stories and start developing ideas to take further with system partners (CCG and Primary Care Trust). Highlight work has included planning of videos to be used in hospital, and GP staff awareness and customer service training.

Other Highlights:

- **Tameside Poverty Action Group:** Network items included Census, Ground work update, and CAB update.
- **Tameside Faiths United:** Our team supported the Committee to put on a Schools Welcome training course for Faith organisations. We also supported Faiths United in planning and admin of their AGM.
- **Tameside Children and Young people strategic meetings:** ensured VCFSE has influence, inputs and benefits from service delivery and training opportunities.
- **Parenting and Mental Health (Children and Young People):** Identified the need for increased knowledge of mental health and parenting services to better support and signpost families, children and young people to Tameside services.
- **Tameside Youth Practitioners Partnership:** Discussed formalising the partnership to be able to lever in funding, with next step to meet Youth Partnership lead and decide on a model.

Greater Manchester and 10GM

GM VCSE Leadership Group, Action Together actively contributed to the production of the [Jan 2020 - Commissioning Framework](#), [Jan 2020 - Policy Paper](#), and [September 2020: Inclusive Economy Paper](#). Action Together senior staff have been a conduit for the VCFSE sector on public partnerships such as GM Moving Executive; GM Reform Board; GM Recovery Coordination Group; GM Contain Cell and GM Population Health Board.

GM=EQA: We provided senior capacity to attend and contribute to Alliance meetings and produced insight into local infrastructure involvement in equalities activities in each borough of Greater Manchester.

GM Homeless Action Network: As part of the Strategy & Support organising group, supported the delivery of two Legislative Theatre workshops on the homelessness prevention strategy for Greater Manchester. Also hosted the quarterly HAN event in December, giving people space to exchange information about support available over winter for people who are homeless, and collectively reflect on the experience of the later months of the pandemic.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Action Together is a founding partner of [10GM](#), and after it established its legal status in February 2019, 10GM employed its first three staff in January 2021. Action Together provides the HR function for 10GM and line manages the staff. We have actively collaborated or led the work for 10GM across the year to deliver the following programmes:

- Active Neighbourhoods
- Achieve Grants
- Answer Cancer
- FASD
- GM Food Network
- GM Moving
- Museums Volunteer Development Programme
- VCSE Leadership Group
- Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

Healthwatch



Our Healthwatch teams in Oldham and Tameside adapted their work following the initial COVID lockdown and restrictions. As with elsewhere in Action Together, this meant an end of in-person engagement work and saw an initial reduction in complaints work which then steadily increased.

Healthwatch teams took the lead in managing signposting of information, communication of health messages, and developed local insight work to understand the health impact of COVID on people with long term conditions and access issues. Teams supported our response to media queries, including following an increase in COVID cases at Tameside Hospital. Throughout we have emphasised our role to represent the interests of the people of Oldham and Tameside, and help local NHS services provide the best care and solutions for the local population.

Our Oldham Healthwatch Manager left the charity at the end of July and a recruitment of a new manager was in place, with Tamoor Tariq joining the team in early August.

[Healthwatch Oldham's Annual Report can be found on their website](#), as can [reports on COVID, digital health, and dentistry](#).

[Healthwatch Tameside's Annual Report can be found on their website](#), as can [reports on COVID, mental health and wellbeing, and dentistry](#).

Miles of Smiles

We adapted our Miles of Smiles community transport service this year, as we saw a reduction in volunteers and a deployment of those remaining into Tameside emergency response activities. We created and managed a revised COVID-safe service to assist with the local response.



In FY2020/21 Miles of Smiles completed 2,755 journeys, travelling a total of 20,966 miles. This included transporting 859 people to COVID vaccinations.

Miles of Smiles

Social Prescribing

Social Prescribing teams in Oldham and Tameside were actively engaged in the emergency COVID response. Our team delivered and managed the emergency access to food in Tameside in the initial weeks, through to operating a telephone and online service for people facing difficulties. The team in Oldham managed their work through telephone and online support and actively worked as part of the deployed workforce completing Test and Trace and targeted community engagement and insight work.

Action Together CIO

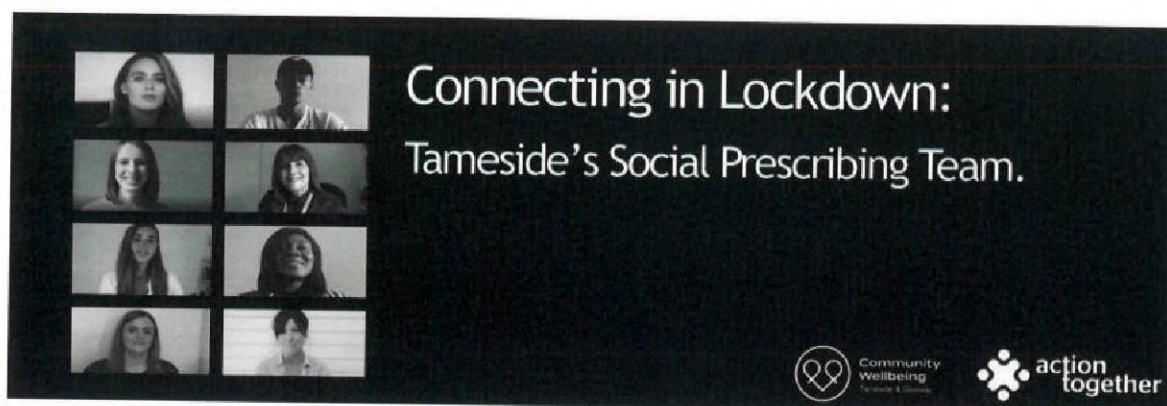
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

The availability of community support was greatly impacted by COVID restrictions, and we worked closely with other wellbeing services to ensure that available support can be accessed and that issues around equity of access are raised and resolved.

As the difficult year progressed, we saw an increase in referrals from across the system, as well as an increase in self-referrals. We particularly saw a large increase of people needing support with housing, loneliness, and isolation.

Tameside team produced a [video title Connecting in Lockdown to promote the social prescribing service](#).



Our Tameside Social Prescribing manager was interviewed by the Department for Health and Social Care to promote social prescribing on social media. The video has been viewed over 750,000 times by people across the UK, with Action Together linked and promoted by the video. [Watch the video on Facebook here.](#)

Oldham Social Prescribing staff worked with Oldham Cares ahead of introducing the Elemental recording and reporting system for the Thriving Communities service. The whole SP team has been trained in Elemental and the roll out has been communicated across the whole of the health and social care system.

Elemental allows engagement and referrals from GP's to be more streamlined. EMIS (the GP clinical system) and Elemental are able to talk to each other, meaning that a referral to social prescribing can be done in a few clicks and even while the patient is with the GP. The GP will also be able to see that the patient has engaged with a Link Worker and the outcomes the individual has had from the support of Social Prescribing. Professionals who don't use EMIS will also be able to refer directly using a portal.

Spotlight on... Oldham VCFSE Women's Network

In the early weeks of the pandemic there was concern from a number of Oldham's Women's Groups about the impact of the pandemic on women and a desire to improve collaboration between groups.

We tasked ourselves with setting up an online network space for women's VCFSE groups in Oldham to support their pandemic response work for women.

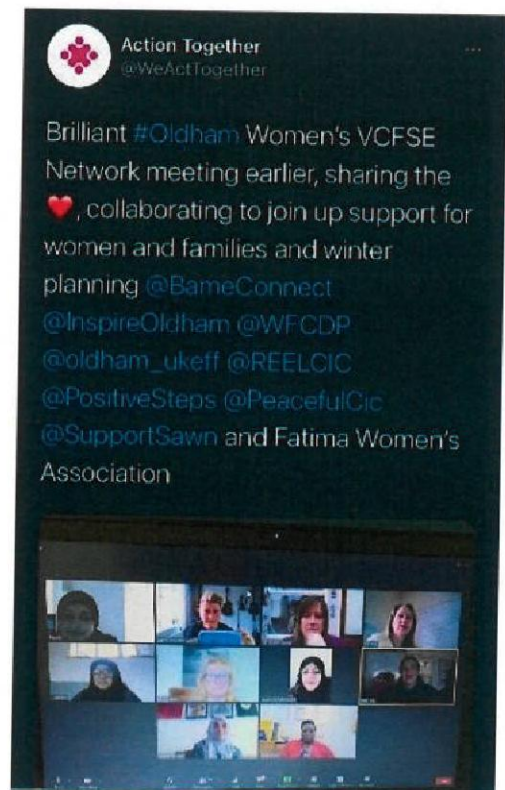
We consulted with local groups and partners and set up a bi-weekly online networking space for women's groups to share their insight, experiences, the work that they were doing to support women through the pandemic, and to explore how they could support each other with the work they were delivering.

By creating this space to come together the network has:

- agreed a set of principles for the way they work
- identified the key issues they were responding to through the pandemic
- improved operational collaboration to improve outcomes for women, including a [directory of services](#) featuring all the network members' offer for women
- gathered insight of lived experience of the impact of domestic abuse and the gaps in support and service for women, especially those from minority communities
- successfully lobbied for grant funding via Oldham's Community Safety Partnership and invested £50,000 through the women's network to invest in the capacity of network members to support women who are experiencing Domestic Abuse.

The success of these projects, and the grant investment approach meant that during March 2021 we were able to agree £100,000 to be invested through the network for Domestic abuse support for 2021/22.

Throughout 2020/21 we were also able to connect offers of donations from local business and charities through to the network members, including brand new clothing for women and their families via NBrown/JD Williams and digital devices via The Good Things Foundation.

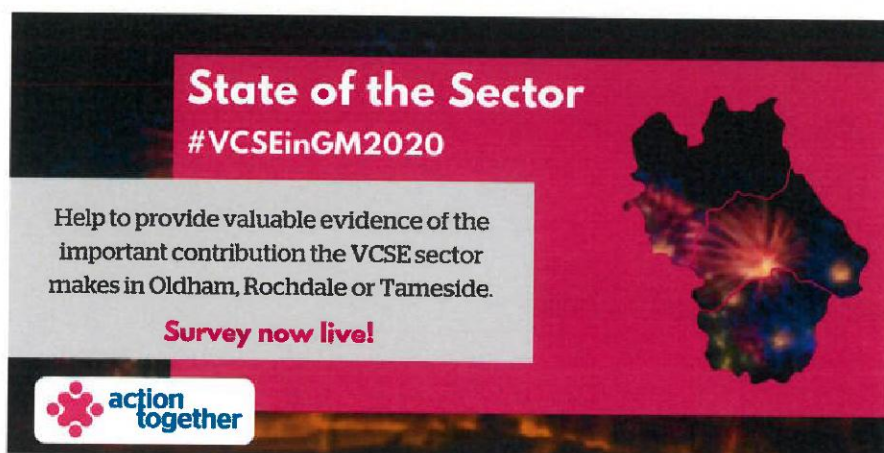


Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

COLLABORATION



The **State of the Sector** survey was a major part of Action Together's collaborative work in 2020, as we worked with 10GM partners and Salford University to collect surveys from our members in all three boroughs. Every member of staff was involved in some way, including in the final push to collect survey responses, with our Tameside team collecting more surveys than any other borough in Greater Manchester. Following the survey, we held three locality focus groups in each of our boroughs and facilitated cross-GM thematic focus groups.

We were members of the research steering group, working with Salford University to develop the final report from the findings, with the full launch due in FY 2021/22, including a cross-GM report, locality report for each borough of GM, and an online launch event. We will share the surveys with all our members and feed the findings into our ongoing strategic work.

In each locality we proactively established **inequality focused action**, strategically calling and contributing to equality impact assessments in relation to the emergency COVID response. In addition, new collaborative spaces have been developed to bring community leaders, groups, and public sector partners together. These include:

- **Oldham** - Equalities Panel; faith leaders/council of mosques action groups; crisis food group; women's network.
- **Rochdale** - Community and Faith Group; developed and facilitated an Equalities Assembly report publicised; food solutions group to ensure access to culturally appropriate food

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

- **Tameside** - BAME Communities weekly group; homeless partnership in Tameside; Refugees, Asylum Seekers action in partnership with Infinity Initiatives and DMNW

We also facilitated joint action on some pre-COVID collaboration work including the Poverty Truth Commission, Refugee And Asylum Seekers network, and Cooperative Engagement work.

In Oldham we co-led the Community Champions Programme, with funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG). The purpose of the programme is 'to support people shown to be most at risk from Coronavirus (COVID-19) including those from an ethnic minority background, disabled people and others to follow safer behaviours and reduce the impact of the virus on themselves and those around them'. Oldham has been awarded £500,000 through the fund and £300,000 will be invested via Action Together directly to the VCFSE sector.

The programme is developing community capacity which supports this strategy but is also building resilience, trust and insight to inform the COVID response and recovery work:

- Expanding the Community Engagement Network through small and medium-sized investments to the Voluntary, Community, Faith & Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector
- Identifying gaps in current engagement strategy and routes
- Co-designing and developing training and targeted communications tools for VCFSE and community leaders, and using more culturally appropriate and accessible communications channels
- Capturing community insight in order to inform our engagement strategy and behaviour change

In the first two months we invested £120,000 of grants to community anchor organisations.

The first **Rochdale Equalities Report** was published following on from the borough's first Equalities Assembly, held in July 2020. The assembly included a series of conversations to help improve our understanding of inequalities and how they can be reduced. The Assembly was a partnership piece of work between Action Together, Rochdale Borough Council and other local organisations including Healthwatch Rochdale.

62 participants took part in discussions on a number of key thematic topics. The assembly included presentations from Public Health on 'Reducing Disparities and Inequalities' and Healthwatch Rochdale on 'What people are telling us about Covid 19'. The report outlines the main themes explored in each conversation and identifies additional topics for future Assemblies.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

The Equalities Report was shared with key decision makers and shared via the Rochdale Borough Partnership Communications Group #TogetherRochdale. [Read the report here.](#)

Rochdale team continued to hold **Equalities Assemblies** throughout the year.

A key piece of work we completed was supporting the Food Solutions Network to develop the **Community Warehouse** in Rochdale.

The FSN was established in response to the COVID pandemic, facilitating over 20 community, voluntary, faith and social enterprise sector organisations, alongside statutory partners, to improve access to food for the people of Rochdale Borough.

The Community Warehouse is a central distribution hub that can receive bulk donations and supplies for redistribution to voluntary sector groups, allowing smaller food providers to take advantage of surplus donation schemes.

The warehouse is stocked with food and essential supplies, but also economic, health and wellbeing support resources created by other charities and partners (such as Family Art Packs, New Baby packs), recognising that food is a 'gateway' to whole person support.

Our initial development offer supported the set-up, governance, funding, and COVID-safe practices of the Community Warehouse. The team then set up dedicated [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages to engage warehouse users, partners, and volunteers, and funded 25 groups to produce and distribute 1,154 Care Packages to people across the borough.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021



Spotlight on... Rochdale Community Warehouse

The Community Warehouse was developed and set up to help combat food poverty and crisis in the borough during the COVID pandemic. The warehouse is a central distribution hub stocked with food and essential items for redistribution to voluntary sector groups and individuals to access food without deprivation.

Food donated at supermarkets is already going to support the excellent work of the Food Banks and pantries in the borough, but many other organisations struggle to get food for their local families or individuals struggling to afford food - so this additional option is a lifeline for the groups it supports.

Our task was to continue to provide this much need service in the borough. Action Together use a team of volunteers to run the warehouse alongside a dedicated member of staff. In addition, we offer a Street Ambassador Programme to help bring donations in the warehouse via local street collections by a team of street ambassadors.

The warehouse not only stocks much needed tinned, boxed, dried food but also has toiletries, baby products, PPE, Care Packs including creative packs, hygiene packs, activity packs and occasional clothing and bedding donations.

The warehouse is open Monday and Wednesdays each week for groups to collect good and each week groups send an up-to-date stock sheet to order goods. The goods are picked and packed by our trusted volunteers and then groups call down to pick up their goods.

Voluntary organisations, statutory bodies and Action Together in Rochdale are working together to tackle food crisis for families and individuals struggling to afford food. We are working together to tackle the stigma and shame around food poverty and access to appropriate food for those isolated in Rochdale. All these groups also come together on a monthly basis through the Food Solution Network to discuss in a co-ordinated way how to tackle food poverty and safe access to appropriate food. In addition, we also feed into the GM Food Network.

The Warehouse now has eight regularly active volunteers contributing 100 volunteer hours per month and supporting over 300 families and individual people. 32 different groups have used the Warehouse, with individual items to the value of £25,000 and goods to the value of £20,190 distributed.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

INVESTMENT

- Distributed £862,287 in direct investment to 587 applications from the local VCFSE sector
- Launched the COVID Community Response Fund, investing £242,640 in 297 local organisations
- Raised £58,150 through public JustGiving appeals to contribute to local COVID responses
- Directly supported 252 groups in developing funding applications

Action Together worked with public sector partners to secure additional resources to support the VCFSE emergency COVID response. Before any national funds were available, we had developed and launched the **COVID Community Response Fund**. The fund is available for Oldham, Rochdale, and Tameside & Glossop groups from the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector working on a COVID-19 Community Response that meet either of these priorities:

- We want to connect local community action and help to co-ordinate efforts in response to the needs of residents. We are especially interested in funding good neighbour, mutual aid and social action projects that directly help people affected by the effects of the virus
- We also want to support the community, voluntary, faith and social enterprise sector to respond with new ideas that help, connect or support people through this crisis

Groups could apply for grants up to £200, or up to £1,000.

Building on our Community Response Fund work in Oldham, we were able to work with public sector partners and agree the pooling of the different local grant pots available for this financial year (circa £180,000) into one single grant fund managed by Action Together - **The Community Recovery Fund**. Launched in September we administered £26,000 in September alone.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

We worked with the Oldham System to develop grant investment through the Covid Test and Trace national funding coming into the Local Authority and agreed £75,000 in grant investments to the VCFSE to support the community engagement and local testing and tracing work.

Working with the partners in the Oldham Community Bronze we also ensured that the majority of the DEFRA Grant coming into the Local Authority has been invested in the VCFSE organisations that are providing the bulk of the Humanitarian Assistance work.

We continued to support the VCFSE sector in Rochdale by distributing grants through the Community Response Fund - Equalities Focus, Places of Worship Reopening fund and FASD Small grants.

We continued to support the VCFSE sector in Tameside by sourcing funding and distributing to VCFSE groups. We released the **Social Infrastructure Funds (SIF)** (between £10,000-£25,000) which replaced the Community Wellbeing Investments in order to support VCFSE organisations to deliver services to meet changing needs within Tameside communities as the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis becomes clearer. Of the 29 groups who expressed an interest 27 met with our team to Community Development Officers to help them to develop their proposals so that they met the new criteria and could be delivered safely.

As the year progressed and our areas moved through different stages of COVID restrictions, we amended the Rochdale CRF to the **Respond, Repair, Recover** fund, aimed at helping groups reopen, and in Tameside moved the process back to Microgrants.

We met with the National Lottery on a regular basis to ensure local groups have a fair access and best chance to secure national emergency monies. We also worked actively with Forever Manchester, who hold the National Emergencies money.

We also introduced fundraising appeals via **JustGiving** for each of the three localities (<https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/donate>). We produced local giving videos and social media campaigns in partnership with Oldham Council to help promote local giving: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=693045064841223&extid=ddX7xjGGoZmAsmmV>



Action Together CIO




Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

We received and managed the donations of money and goods to the VCFSE, ranging from GM funds to purchase refrigeration for foodbanks through to pallets of items delivered by businesses in Oldham. This required a significant logistical operation and management team effort including increased financial processing and management. In total, **£58,150** was donated by the public through JustGiving.

We surveyed our members to assess their challenges and needs from us and local authorities. The overwhelming response was a request for more funding, funding information, and support. As new funds became available, often with short deadlines, we introduced our Funding ebulletin. This is distributed fortnightly on Mondays to all members and has seen an increase in visits to our Funding pages and in applications for funding.

Following consultation with our members in Q1, we reformatted our [Find Funding webpage](#) to make it more accessible and include more funding on the page. The page is now regularly the most visited on our website and has led to an increase in funding applications.

Care Packages - Small Grants - Rochdale	GM Moving Oldham Local Pilot	Oldham Community Recovery Fund
		
Aims/priorities: We are working with a group of organisations called the Food Solutions Network, to open a Food Cooperative Warehouse which will be stocked with supplies...	Aims/priorities: The Oldham Local Pilot Investment Grant's support local projects which will contribute to increasing physical activity. We are open to any ideas for all groups...	Aims/priorities: We recognise community action is taking place across the Borough and we want to encourage and support this action and help to sustain and maintain our vibrant...
Amount: up to £1000	Amount: up to £1000	Amount: up to £1000
Deadline: Monday, 16th November 2020	Deadline: Wednesday, 31st March 2021	Deadline: Date not specified.

We developed the support available to our members with funding applications and developed a funding bid mentor programme. As groups looked to reopen under the spring roadmap out of lockdown, we prepared for a month-long funding campaign in April FY2021/22, with the aim of promoting our funds, fundraising ideas, and our funding support. This Action Together-wide campaign will be the first of our quarterly campaigns around different priorities for FY2021/22.

It should be noted that we distributed and handled applications in a far larger number compared to previous years. We did this with the same capacity and resource as previous years, and a thank you must go to our team for their hard work in promoting funds, supporting groups in applications, managing funding pots and distributing investment across the three boroughs. This money has gone straight to grassroots groups making a difference through COVID at a time when it was most needed.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

Future plans

We are proud to have been part of the emergency response to COVID in each of our three localities, and in the response across Greater Manchester. The VCFSE and the broader social infrastructure that connects people and creates a sense of community has been unquestionably highlighted as critical to our society. Action Together will work hard to **ensure the value and important role the sector plays is not forgotten** and that significant step change in the resourcing and capabilities of the sector are developed alongside these thanks. We will use the upcoming State of the Sector research and build on our own insights to continue advocating for the local VCFSE.

People from across the sector stepped up and took on responsibility to respond to the needs of our communities over the last year, and we must recognize this by **supporting individual, staff, and sector resilience**. We need to focus on the wellbeing of our collective workforces, with flexibility and understanding of what people have faced and continue to face. We need to drive forward large-scale organisational development to ensure the sector can transform and adapt its offer for the benefit of a c hanging country.

We must **talk about inequality and injustice** in our society. COVID exacerbated existing issues, and we want to take action to tackle this internally within Action Together, as a VCFSE sector, and across system boundaries to address the deep roots of inequality that persist. We care about amplifying the voices of people that often go unheard, and this will be essential if collectively we are to realise the recommendations of the recent GM Equalities Commission report.

We must **recognise and thank** people for the compassion and solidarity shown over recent months, and we plan to do this publicly in celebrations of all forms of volunteering. We will work to recognise that contribution in the way we work and provide ways to make it easier for people to give to others - whether that's in their time, resources or connections.

This is a major opportunity to re-set and build the society we want but that takes skills, time and energy from a wide range of people. Partnership working has been central to the response to the pandemic, with key connections being made inside and outside the sector. We must **build on our connections**, and our role as facilitators and system connectors is essential. We will further develop our place-based working methods to respond to the needs of communities across Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside.

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

Financial review

Funds at 31 March 2021 amounted to £3,826,491 of which £2,796,790 were restricted. Expenditure in the year met the objectives that were required by the principal funding sources, as described in their funding agreements.

Restricted funds held at the end of the year have been carried forward for the future support of specific projects. Action Together recognises that it is responsible and accountable for public funds. It further recognises that it needs clarity and transparency in demonstrating how these funds are managed and, in particular, the level of funds that it judges appropriate to hold in reserve.

The Trustees have established a reserves policy which requires:

- Reserves are maintained at a level which ensures that Action Together has the ability to meet its ongoing commitments with sufficient reserves to cover a minimum of six month's running costs, redundancy costs and core committed costs
- A proportion of reserves are maintained in a readily realisable form
- The calculation of the reserves is an integral part of the organisation's planning, budget and forecast cycle and will take into account:
 1. Risks associated with each stream of income and expenditure being different from that budgeted
 2. Planned activity level
 3. Organisation's commitments

The reserves fund is managed and monitored at each Finance Sub-Group meeting and reported back to the full Board of Trustees within the financial reporting procedures.

The calculated reserves fund will be reviewed quarterly to ensure it takes account of changing circumstances.

The reserves position as at 31 March 2021 is as follows:

Total requirement of six months running costs, redundancy and committed core costs:
£424,518

Total unrestricted reserves, cash and investments (net of tangible fixed assets): £858,694

The trustees have assessed the current financial standing of the organisation with reference to current activity, projections, cash flows and reserves and have concluded that the charity is a going concern.

Action Together CIO

Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Action Together CIO
Charity registration number	1165512
Principal office	95-97 Penny Meadow Ashton-Under-Lyne OL6 6EP
The trustees	A. Ball R. Farnworth C. Guereca A. Parkes J. Yates K. Lowes A. Wiggans J. Rehmen C. Gregory M. Sarwar R. Yaseen J. Mellor
Auditor	John Alderdice & Sons T/A The Bailey Group 30 Yoden Way Peterlee Co. Durham SR8 1AL
Bankers	Unity Trust Bank plc 4 Brindley Place Birmingham B1 2HP CCLA Investment Management Senator House 85 Queen Victoria Street London EC4V 4ET Blackrock Investment Management (UK) Ltd 12 Throgmorton Avenue London EC2N 2DL Castlefield 9th Floor 111 Piccadilly Manchester M1 2HY

Action Together CIO
Trustees' Annual Report *(continued)*
Year ended 31 March 2021

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

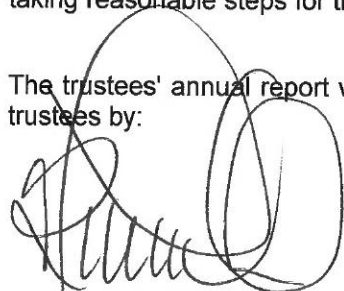
The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the applicable Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations, and the provisions of the Trust Deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 18 October 2021 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Roger Farnworth
Chair

Action Together CIO

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Action Together CIO

Year ended 31 March 2021

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Action Together CIO (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comprise the statement of financial activities, statement of financial position, statement of cash flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Action Together CIO

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Action Together CIO *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the trustees' report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Action Together CIO

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Action Together CIO *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

Action Together CIO

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Action Together CIO *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and regulations made under section 154 of that Act. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Christopher Bailey (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of
John Alderdice & Sons T/a The Bailey Group
Chartered Accountants & statutory auditor
30 Yoden Way
Peterlee
Co. Durham
SR8 1AL

18 October 2021

Action Together CIO
Statement of Financial Activities
Year ended 31 March 2021

		Unrestricted funds £	2021 Restricted funds £	Total funds £	2020 Total funds £
	Note				
Income					
Funded charitable activities	4	–	4,691,156	4,691,156	3,582,796
Activities for generating funds	5	55,866	–	55,866	38,477
Investment income	6	6,761	–	6,761	12,673
Total income		<u>62,627</u>	<u>4,691,156</u>	<u>4,753,783</u>	<u>3,633,946</u>
Expenditure					
Management and administration	7	541,711	–	541,711	611,688
Expenditure on charitable activities	8,9	–	3,944,894	3,944,894	2,931,400
Central administration and management costs	10	(477,033)	–	(477,033)	(577,566)
Total expenditure		<u>64,678</u>	<u>3,944,894</u>	<u>4,009,572</u>	<u>2,965,522</u>
Net gains/losses on fixed assets	11	65,859	128,147	194,006	(86,296)
Net income and net movement in funds		<u>63,808</u>	<u>874,409</u>	<u>938,217</u>	<u>582,128</u>
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		965,893	1,922,381	2,888,274	2,306,146
Total funds carried forward		<u>1,029,701</u>	<u>2,796,790</u>	<u>3,826,491</u>	<u>2,888,274</u>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.
All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The notes on pages 50 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Action Together CIO
Statement of Financial Position
31 March 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	16	171,007	168,344
Investments	17	1,320,953	1,126,487
		<u>1,491,960</u>	<u>1,294,831</u>
Current assets			
Debtors	18	174,166	95,990
Cash at bank and in hand		2,693,600	1,687,159
		<u>2,867,766</u>	<u>1,783,149</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	19	533,235	189,706
Net current assets		<u>2,334,531</u>	<u>1,593,443</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>3,826,491</u>	<u>2,888,274</u>
Net assets		<u>3,826,491</u>	<u>2,888,274</u>
Funds of the charity			
Restricted funds		2,796,790	1,922,381
Unrestricted funds		1,029,701	965,893
Total charity funds	21	<u>3,826,491</u>	<u>2,888,274</u>

These financial statements were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 18 October 2021, and are signed on behalf of the board by:



A. Parkes
Trustee

The notes on pages 50 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Action Together CIO
Statement of Cash Flows
Year ended 31 March 2021

	2021 £	2020 £
Cash flows from operating activities		
Net income	938,217	582,128
<i>Adjustments for:</i>		
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	11,540	7,992
Net gains/losses on fixed assets	(194,006)	86,296
Other interest receivable and similar income	(6,761)	(12,673)
Accrued expenses	78,264	7,670
<i>Changes in:</i>		
Trade and other debtors	(78,176)	435,210
Trade and other creditors	265,265	(921,803)
Cash generated from operations	1,014,343	184,820
Interest received	6,761	12,673
Net cash from operating activities	<u>1,021,104</u>	<u>197,493</u>
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of tangible assets	(14,203)	(14,961)
Purchases of other investments	(2,647)	(5,050)
Proceeds from sale of other investments	2,187	137,527
Net cash (used in)/from investing activities	<u>(14,663)</u>	<u>117,516</u>
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	1,006,441	315,009
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	1,687,159	1,372,150
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	<u>2,693,600</u>	<u>1,687,159</u>

The notes on pages 50 to 60 form part of these financial statements.

Action Together CIO
Notes to the Financial Statements
Year ended 31 March 2021

1. General information

The charity is a public benefit entity and a registered charity in England and Wales and is unincorporated. The address of the principal office is 95-97 Penny Meadow, Ashton-Under-Lyne, OL6 6EP.

2. Statement of compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS 102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)) and the Charities Act 2011.

3. Accounting policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and properties measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported. These estimates and judgements are continually reviewed and are based on experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees to further any of the charity's purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular future project or commitment.

Restricted funds are subjected to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or through the terms of an appeal, and fall into one of two sub-classes: restricted income funds or endowment funds.

Incoming resources

All income is included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity, it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

3. Accounting policies *(continued)*

Incoming resources *(continued)*

- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service. This is classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it will be regarded as restricted.
- receipts received during the year which are not to be expended until after the balance sheet date are not recognised as income for the year and are included in income deferred (note 19).

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure includes any VAT which cannot be fully recovered, and is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities, events, non-charitable trading activities.
- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by a charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity apportioned to charitable activities.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Tangible assets

Tangible assets are initially recorded at cost, and subsequently stated at cost less any accumulated depreciation and impairment losses. Any tangible assets carried at revalued amounts are recorded at the fair value at the date of revaluation less any subsequent accumulated depreciation and subsequent accumulated impairment losses.

An increase in the carrying amount of an asset as a result of a revaluation, is recognised in other recognised gains and losses, unless it reverses a charge for impairment that has previously been recognised as expenditure within the statement of financial activities. A decrease in the carrying amount of an asset as a result of revaluation, is recognised in other recognised gains and losses, except to which it offsets any previous revaluation gain, in which case the loss is shown within other recognised gains and losses on the statement of financial activities.

Depreciation

Depreciation is calculated so as to write off the cost or valuation of an asset, less its residual value, over the useful economic life of that asset as follows:

Fixtures and fittings	- 25% straight line
Motor vehicles	- 25% straight line
Equipment	- 25% straight line

The fair value of freehold property will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

3. Accounting policies *(continued)*

Investments

Unlisted equity investments are initially recorded at cost, and subsequently measured at fair value. If fair value cannot be reliably measured, assets are measured at cost less impairment.

Listed investments are measured at fair value with changes in fair value being recognised in income or expenditure.

Impairment of fixed assets

A review for indicators of impairment is carried out at each reporting date, with the recoverable amount being estimated where such indicators exist. Where the carrying value exceeds the recoverable amount, the asset is impaired accordingly. Prior impairments are also reviewed for possible reversal at each reporting date.

For the purposes of impairment testing, when it is not possible to estimate the recoverable amount of an individual asset, an estimate is made of the recoverable amount of the cash-generating unit to which the asset belongs. The cash-generating unit is the smallest identifiable group of assets that includes the asset and generates cash inflows that largely independent of the cash inflows from other assets or groups of assets.

Financial instruments

A financial asset or a financial liability is recognised only when the entity becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at the amount receivable or payable including any related transaction costs, unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where it is recognised at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest for a similar debt instrument.

Current assets and current liabilities are subsequently measured at the cash or other consideration expected to be paid or received and not discounted.

Where investments in shares or preference shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably, the investment is subsequently measured at fair value with changes in fair value recognised in income and expenditure. All other such investments are subsequently measured at cost less impairment.

Financial assets that are measured at cost or amortised cost are reviewed for objective evidence of impairment at the end of each reporting date. If there is objective evidence of impairment, an impairment loss is recognised under the appropriate heading in the statement of financial activities in which the initial gain was recognised.

For all equity instruments regardless of significance, and other financial assets that are individually significant, these are assessed individually for impairment.

Any reversals of impairment are recognised immediately, to the extent that the reversal does not result in a carrying amount of the financial asset that exceeds what the carrying amount would have been had the impairment not previously been recognised.

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

3. Accounting policies *(continued)*

Defined contribution plans

Contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised as an expense in the period in which the related service is provided. Prepaid contributions are recognised as an asset to the extent that the prepayment will lead to a reduction in future payments or a cash refund.

When contributions are not expected to be settled wholly within 12 months of the end of the reporting date in which the employees render the related service, the liability is measured on a discounted present value basis. The unwinding of the discount is recognised as an expense in the period in which it arises.

4. Funded charitable activities

	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Core Infrastructure	1,109,168	1,109,168	892,231	892,231
Healthwatch	307,653	307,653	311,930	311,930
Investments in VCFSE	1,661,560	1,661,560	1,171,875	1,171,875
Social Prescribing/Community wellbeing	1,140,363	1,140,363	920,715	920,715
Greater Manchester Projects	126,358	126,358	128,976	128,976
Big Local	105,525	105,525	77,069	77,069
Covid Response	240,529	240,529	80,000	80,000
	<u>4,691,156</u>	<u>4,691,156</u>	<u>3,582,796</u>	<u>3,582,796</u>

The project split of development, volunteering and partnerships income as shown in the 2020 financial statements has been reclassified as core infrastructure for the current year.

5. Activities for generating funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Accounts and payroll services	25,196	25,196	38,477	38,477
Lloyds core activity grant	30,000	30,000	—	—
Miscellaneous	670	670	—	—
	<u>55,866</u>	<u>55,866</u>	<u>38,477</u>	<u>38,477</u>

6. Investment income

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Bank interest	1,291	1,291	5,284	5,284
Dividends	5,470	5,470	7,389	7,389
	<u>6,761</u>	<u>6,761</u>	<u>12,673</u>	<u>12,673</u>

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

6. Investment income *(continued)*

In addition income on investments held within the Action Oldham Fund and the Tameside 4 Good Fund have been included in the income of those funds:-

	2021 £	2020 £
Bank interest and dividends	<u>24,076</u>	<u>25,653</u>

7. Management and administration

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Management and administration costs	<u>541,711</u>	<u>541,711</u>	<u>611,688</u>	<u>611,688</u>
		2021 £		2020 £
Staff costs		371,995		419,767
Premises and office costs		144,371		165,993
Income generation costs		—		5,445
Irrecoverable Vat		11,934		11,543
Investment income management fees		1,870		948
Depreciation		<u>11,541</u>		<u>7,992</u>
		<u>541,711</u>		<u>611,688</u>

Premises and office costs include audit fees £7,750 (2020 : £6,720).

8. Expenditure on charitable activities by fund type

	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Core Infrastructure	781,569	781,569	653,266	653,266
Healthwatch	227,743	227,743	261,644	261,644
Investments in VCFSE	1,064,311	1,064,311	761,195	761,195
Social Prescribing/Community Wellbeing	994,154	994,154	640,152	640,152
Greater Manchester Projects	119,011	119,011	11,628	11,628
Big Local	40,372	40,372	25,206	25,206
Covid Response	240,701	240,701	731	731
Support costs	<u>477,033</u>	<u>477,033</u>	<u>577,578</u>	<u>577,578</u>
	<u>3,944,894</u>	<u>3,944,894</u>	<u>2,931,400</u>	<u>2,931,400</u>

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

9. Expenditure on charitable activities by activity type

	Activities undertaken directly £	Support costs £	Total funds 2021 £	Total fund 2020 £
Core Infrastructure	781,569	231,984	1,013,553	929,135
Healthwatch	227,743	73,354	301,097	316,932
Investments in VCFSE	1,064,311	51,733	1,116,044	869,564
Social Prescribing/Community Wellbeing	994,154	103,219	1,097,373	731,976
Greater Manchester Projects	119,011	7,576	126,587	53,332
Big Local	40,372	9,167	49,539	29,606
Covid Response	240,701	—	240,701	855
	<u>3,467,861</u>	<u>477,033</u>	<u>3,944,894</u>	<u>2,931,400</u>

10. Central administration and management costs

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Costs recovered from administration and management of restricted funds	<u>(477,033)</u>	<u>(477,033)</u>	<u>(577,566)</u>	<u>(577,566)</u>

11. Net gains/losses on fixed assets

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £
Gains/(losses) on listed investments	<u>65,859</u>	<u>128,147</u>	<u>194,006</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Gains/(losses) on listed investments	<u>(23,120)</u>	<u>(63,176)</u>	<u>(86,296)</u>

12. Net income

Net income is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2021 £	2020 £
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	<u>11,540</u>	<u>7,992</u>

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

13. Staff costs

The total staff costs and employee benefits for the reporting period are analysed as follows:

	2021	2020
	£	£
Wages and salaries	1,896,817	1,625,361
Social security costs	167,716	144,604
Employer contributions to pension plans	104,401	89,129
Other employee benefits	—	14,098
	<u>2,168,934</u>	<u>1,873,192</u>

The average head count of employees during the year was 73 (2020: 65). The average number of full-time equivalent employees during the year is analysed as follows:

	2021	2020
	No.	No.
Direct charitable activities	62	54
Office and administration	11	11
	<u>73</u>	<u>65</u>

The number of employees whose remuneration for the year fell within the following bands, were:

	2021	2020
	No.	No.
£60,000 to £69,999	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

14. Trustee remuneration and expenses

The charity trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year.

15. Volunteers

Action Together supports people to volunteer in their area, and assists local organisations in developing volunteer programmes, policies and roles. Residents of Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside can register with our volunteer brokerage service, and we will match them with local volunteering opportunities.

As the recognised volunteer service for the three boroughs, we organised emergency volunteering in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included adapting our volunteer registration service to make it easier for people to quickly register online, in order to capitalise on the wave of public support early in the first lockdown. We also developed guidelines, training and advice for volunteers to remain safe and protect the people that they were supporting.

In the last year:

- 2,175 people registered to volunteer with Action Together- 1,972 volunteers were matched with roles
- An average of 214 people were actively volunteering in their community each month

Action Together volunteer roles included doorstep donations and collection schemes, delivery of PPE, community engagement in supporting social distancing and test and trace messaging, support at vaccination centres, and volunteering at foodbanks, food distribution hubs and community hubs.

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

16. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold property £	Fixtures and fittings £	Motor vehicles £	Equipment £	Total £
Cost or valuation					
At 1 April 2020	150,000	71,143	24,299	28,626	274,068
Additions	—	462	—	13,741	14,203
Disposals	—	(32,525)	—	(17,663)	(50,188)
At 31 March 2021	150,000	39,080	24,299	24,704	238,083
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2020	—	57,792	24,299	23,633	105,724
Charge for the year	—	5,365	—	6,175	11,540
Disposals	—	(32,525)	—	(17,663)	(50,188)
At 31 March 2021	—	30,632	24,299	12,145	67,076
Carrying amount					
At 31 March 2021	150,000	8,448	—	12,559	171,007
At 31 March 2020	150,000	13,351	—	4,993	168,344

The property was valued at March 31, 2017 by Waltons Property Services Limited at £150,000 at open market value. The Trustees have reviewed this valuation and believe this continues to represent the fair value of the property at March 31, 2021.

17. Investments

	Listed investments £	Other investments £	Total £
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2020	1,101,487	25,000	1,126,487
Additions	2,647	—	2,647
Disposals	—	(2,187)	(2,187)
Fair value movements	194,006	—	194,006
At 31 March 2021	1,298,140	22,813	1,320,953
Impairment			
At 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021	—	—	—
Carrying amount			
At 31 March 2021	1,298,140	22,813	1,320,953
At 31 March 2020	1,101,487	25,000	1,126,487

Financial assets held at fair value

All listed investments are held in the United Kingdom and are incorporated at fair value at March 31, 2021.

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

18. Debtors

	2021 £	2020 £
Accounts receivable	160,483	68,983
Prepayments	8,551	17,099
Other debtors	5,132	9,908
	<u>174,166</u>	<u>95,990</u>

19. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2021 £	2020 £
Amounts payable	7,875	8,110
Accruals	121,491	43,227
Social security and other taxes	88,669	78,185
Income deferred	315,200	60,184
	<u>533,235</u>	<u>189,706</u>

Income deferred is explained in the Accounting Policies under Incoming resources.

During the year the charity received a legacy of £200,000. These are restricted funds and are to be distributed in the form of grants throughout Tameside.

20. Pensions and other post retirement benefits

Defined contribution plans

The amount recognised in income or expenditure as an expense in relation to defined contribution plans was £104,401 (2020: £89,129).

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

21. Analysis of charitable funds

Unrestricted funds

	At 1 Apr 2020 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Gains and losses £	At 31 Mar 2021 £
General funds	965,893	62,627	(64,678)	(77,000)	65,859	952,701
Designated Fund	—	—	—	77,000	—	77,000
	<u>965,893</u>	<u>62,627</u>	<u>(64,678)</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>65,859</u>	<u>1,029,701</u>

	At 1 Apr 2019 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Gains and losses £	At 31 Mar 2020 £
General funds	940,822	51,150	(34,123)	31,164	(23,120)	965,893
Designated Fund	—	—	—	—	—	—
	<u>940,822</u>	<u>51,150</u>	<u>(34,123)</u>	<u>31,164</u>	<u>(23,120)</u>	<u>965,893</u>

Restricted funds

	At 1 Apr 2020 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Gains and losses £	At 31 Mar 2021 £
Direct charitable activities	1,922,381	4,691,156	(3,944,894)	—	128,147	2,796,790

	At 1 Apr 2019 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Gains and losses £	At 31 Mar 2020 £
Direct charitable activities	1,365,325	3,582,797	(2,931,401)	(31,164)	(63,176)	1,922,381

Action Together CIO

Notes to the Financial Statements *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2021

22. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £
Tangible fixed assets	171,007	—	171,007
Investments	368,427	952,526	1,320,953
Current assets	708,302	2,159,464	2,867,766
Creditors less than 1 year	(218,035)	(315,200)	(533,235)
Net assets	1,029,701	2,796,790	3,826,491

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £
Tangible fixed assets	168,344	—	168,344
Investments	304,682	821,805	1,126,487
Current assets	622,389	1,160,760	1,783,149
Creditors less than 1 year	(129,522)	(60,184)	(189,706)
Net assets	965,893	1,922,381	2,888,274

23. Going concern

The Trustees have assessed the current financial standing of the organisation with reference to current activity projections, cash flows and reserves as well as within the context of the Covid pandemic and its impact on the organisation and have concluded that the charity is a going concern.

24. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 Apr 2020 £	Cash flows £	At 31 Mar 2021 £
Cash at bank and in hand	1,687,159	1,006,441	2,693,600